ABSTRACT

Over the years, Bai Juyi's poetic theories have drawn the attention of many scholars. Their studies can be fundamentally categorized into four types: "political poetic discourse" 政治诗论说, "realistic poetic discourse" 现实主义诗论说, "song poem discourse" 歌诗理论说 and "post-Han ideological discourse" 汉以后意识形态之套语因袭说. All these studies focus on different perspectives; and have established their own brilliant insights. However, none of them can dominate the other as each has its merit and flaw.

This paper aims to find a different approach to study Bai Juyi's poetic theories with reference to the previous studies. It first explores the historical context of Mid-Tang, and attempts to find out the relationship between the transformation of literary ideology and the establishment of Bai's poetic theories. It then narrates and analyzes the content of Bai's concept of "Shi yi ming dao" 诗以明道 (poetry as a vehicle to illuminate the Way). Seeing that the usual approach of dividing Bai's poetic theories into earlier and later period has caused various problems, this paper will instead focus on the concept of "Shi yi ming dao" and analyze Bai's poetic theories from four aspects: "feeling as root" 根情, "language as sprout" 苗言, "sound as flower" 华声 and "meaning as fruit" 实义.